National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

Public engagement with biotechnologies offers lessons for the governance of geoengineering research and beyond

Author(s): Stilgoe J, Watson M, Kuo K
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Abstract:

In this paper, we reflect on our involvement in one of the first major research projects in the emerging area of geoengineering (the deliberate intervention in the planetary climate). The project, Stratospheric Particle Injection for Climate Engineering (SPICE), proposed an outdoor experiment that attracted substantial public scrutiny despite a strong consensus that the experiment posed no direct environmental risk. A programme of stakeholder engagement took place that sought a deep understanding of the views about the proposed experiment. The lessons from this experiment build on insights from public engagement with the biosciences and biotechnology. In particular, we see the importance of questions of context and purpose for scientific research. This has important implications for the governance of geoengineering research. Efforts to detach areas of research from public scrutiny by using thresholds, whether these are drawn at a particular level of environmental effect or at the doors of a laboratory, will encounter problems of public credibility. Geoengineering is unavoidably entangled in a political discussion that scientists should seek to understand and engage with.

Source: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3825657

Resource Description

Communication: ☑

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience: ☑

audience to whom the resource is directed

Researcher

Other Communication Audience: civil society organisation (environmental or humanitarian non-governmental organisa- tion [NGO]) representatives

Exposure : ☑

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Unspecified Exposure

Geographic Feature: ☑

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location: ☑

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

Non-United States: Europe

European Region/Country: European Country

Other European Country : United Kingdom

Health Co-Benefit/Co–Harm (Adaption/Mitigation): ☑

specification of beneficial or harmful impacts to health resulting from efforts to reduce or cope with greenhouse gases

A focus of content

Health Impact: ☑

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Health Outcome Unspecified

Intervention: ☑

strategy to prepare for or reduce the impact of climate change on health

A focus of content

Mitigation/Adaptation: ☑

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Resource Type: ☑

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Timescale: ☑

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

Vulnerability/Impact Assessment: ☑

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

A focus of content